

First Parish Church Celebrates Founders Weekend

Churches



L-r, Heidi Hasselman, Diane and John Narkunas.

The First Parish Church climaxed the year-long celebration of its 350th anniversary with a Founders Thanksgiving weekend Oct. 9 and 10.

Forty descendants of the founding families of the town, from as far away as Syracuse and Denver, returned to Duxbury to join church members and townspeople in a weekend of historical activities and religious services.

The church was founded in 1632 by Elder William Brewster, and among its original members were Myles Standish and John Alden. It was the 2nd church established in the New World by the Plymouth Pilgrims.

Founders Weekend activities began Saturday morning with the arrival of guests and an oral history tape recording project at the church, and the afternoon was devoted to tours of historic Duxbury sites. Saturday night's concert by Scottish folksinger Jean Redpath had nearly 500 people in the church.

The Sunday morning worship service, attended by

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about 250, was conducted in the manner of a 1632 Pilgrim service, based on church records and with research assistance by town historian Dorothy Wentworth and Plimoth Plantation.

Lay "elders" conducted much of the service, including a lecture by Peter Smith against parish members sitting too much in ale houses. Charles Tarbox read the scripture, and Anthony Pilla interpreted it in words appropriate to the 17th century and to the present. Greetings were brought from the First Parish Church in Plymouth, the original Pilgrim church.

The Rev. Robert Walsh preached on the Pilgrim contribution to religious tolerance in America, basing his sermon on the thought of John Robinson, the Pilgrims' minister during their years in Holland. Although Robinson did not accompany the group that came to the New World, his teaching that each person should test religious doctrine for himself was a strong influence on the Plymouth group.

For the service, the Rev. Walsh, the elders and some church members and visitors were dressed in 17th century costumes, many of them lent by Plimoth Plantation. Following the service, a number of the members and visitors went to Plimoth Plantation for the Harvest Festival there.

The weekend concluded with a thanksgiving feast at the church followed by a vesper service.